



## Squamous dysplasia and early esophageal cancer in the Linxian region of China: distinctive endoscopic lesions

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**Author:** Dawsey SM, Wang GQ, Weinstein WM, Lewin KJ, et.al.

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**Abstract:** **BACKGROUND:** Linxian, China, has one of the highest rates of esophageal cancer in the world. To design a logical biopsy strategy for large-scale endoscopic surveys in Linxian, the aim of this study was to determine whether squamous dysplasia and early squamous cancer are associated with visible lesions that can be targeted for biopsy. **METHODS:** Sixty-three Linxian patients with balloon cytological evidence of squamous dysplasia or early cancer of the esophagus had biopsy specimens taken every 4 cm and additional specimens taken from all visually abnormal areas. The appearance of the 398 biopsy sites was described, and abnormal-appearing areas were photographed. The endoscopic descriptions were then compared with the biopsy diagnoses. **RESULTS:** Twenty-five of 31 (81%) moderately dysplastic or worse specimens (including all nine specimens of invasive cancer) came from visually abnormal sites classified as friability, focal red area, erosion, plaque, or nodule. Fifteen of 16 (94%) patients with moderate dysplasia or worse biopsy diagnoses would have been identified if only these visible target lesions had been sampled. **CONCLUSIONS:** For surveillance in this high-risk population, random biopsy specimens may be unnecessary; sampling the target lesions described appears sufficient to detect nearly all invasive cancer and most dysplasia. Awareness of these lesion appearances may also aid in earlier detection of squamous cancers of the esophagus in lower-risk populations such as those in Europe and North America.